ships is avoided. National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan (NOSDCP) is in place, with Coast Guard as the National Coordinating Agency, to take care of the environmental and pollution hazards.

Foreign crew on Indian ships

486. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering a proposal to allow employment of foreign crew on Indian ships; and

(b) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Inadequacy of Indian fleet

487. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in 2003-04, more than half the vessels chartered by his Ministry to carry cargo were of foreign origin indicating the utter inadequacy of the Indian fleet to support the country's trade;

(b) if so, whether this has adversely affected the freight earnings; and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to deal with the inadequacy of Indian fleet in country's trade?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) No Sir,

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The Government has been taking various steps from time to time for development/stabilization of the Shipping industry and to deal with the inadequacy of Indian fleet in the country's trade and also to compete in the international market. Some important measures taken are listed below: